

Swords of Iron War

SNAPSHOT

October 19, 2023* | Education

*The brief offers a current overview based on the information accessible to us at this time.

During these challenging days, a special interest group is being established for foundations and private donors involved in the field of education. Those interested in joining can contact Maya Foner via email at Mfoner@jfunders.org. The meeting and summary aforementioned are part of the process of establishing the interest group.

The challenge: In times of crisis, there is a pressing need to expedite the establishment of an interest group composed of donors and foundations in the field of education. This is a time for cooperation. How does the educational landscape appear in times of emergency, and what is the role of philanthropic foundations at this juncture?



Status Report

➤ How the Ministry of Education is Coping with the Outbreak of War

- **Immediate:** On Saturday, October 7, 2023, at 10am, the education system opened an emotional support hotline staffed by professional psychologists and educational counselors to address the needs of parents, students, and staff. The hotline has received real-time inquiries from affected communities. At noon, a situation room was set up to formulate an updated status report and understand the needs of the education system. Since then, the situation room convenes twice a day to provide tailored support to educators themselves.

Materials for emotional discussions with students and families have been created, helping them cope with the distressing content they are encountering. Daily updates are sent out, and psychologists and educational counselors are on hand to assist.

- **Emergency:**

- Establishment of a **crisis management team** for war victims to support educational staff, students, and parents. In addition, each family will be assigned a dedicated “case manager”.
- The establishment of a **support team** for evacuees to provide guidance, and support for displaced individuals.

* This status report is based on a meeting held by the Jewish Funders Network (JFN) and the Forum of Foundations in Israel on October 19, 2023. The JFN meeting was moderated by Lisa Levi, the leader of the philanthropic interest group in the field of education at JFN. The speakers at the meeting included:

- **Ina Zaltzman**, Deputy Director General at the Ministry of Education, responsible for the pedagogical management of the Ministry of Education.
- **Dr. Keren Raz Natzar**, recruited on an emergency basis by the Ministry of Education, in charge of establishing the Support team for evacuees for reception facilities on behalf of the Ministry of Education.
- **Eyal Glass**, Deputy Director General of Youth Organizations Council.

➤ Guiding Principles

- Emphasize the importance of **remote learning** for the sake of stability and resilience, striving to establish routines and facilitate effective message transmission.
- **Collaborative Efforts:** Implementing activities across various channels, conducting lectures for parents, engaging with the Arab community, and distributing computers for those in need.
- **Support for Southern Municipalities:** Addressing basic needs for those who have not sought assistance or been redirected by the government.
- **Emotional Support:** Many individuals are impacted – not just during the initial crisis – and virtually everyone has someone in their circle who has experienced trauma, even in distant circles. Long-term therapeutic responses will be needed such as assisting families who have lost loved ones, missing individuals, hostages, and more.
- **Urgent Needs:** Volunteers and resources are in high demand.

➤ Evacuees and Displaced Persons (“Residents in Crisis”)

The Ministry of Education is actively working to help all refugee facilities managed by the Home Front Command, following government decisions, as well as displaced individuals who have taken the initiative independently. In each of these facilities, there is significant involvement of both voluntary and community organizations, emphasizing the importance of building partnerships.

One guiding principle is to have a permanent staff alongside each volunteer group, ensuring an immediate response, especially for children, from newborns up to age 8.

The needs in this situation are constantly evolving and can range from equipment and supplies to the need for additional staff. It's crucial to understand that the response required for the initial affected population should be both medium and long-term, including the establishment of schools.

This situation is complex, and while the government's response may seem slow, it plays a pivotal role in coordinating infrastructure-level responses and fostering collaboration with all stakeholders involved. This unique situation necessitates a continuous data collection effort, as new facilities are opened and established regularly, and there is an ongoing need for additional resources.

In total, there are approximately 200 facilities, some of which are temporary, and the activities at these facilities are carried out on a weekly basis.

The Ministry of Education's responses are organized at the district level and are tailored to the specific needs of each community, including the ultra-Orthodox and Bedouin populations. They are highly flexible, focusing on community-specific needs rather than relying solely on standardized Ministry of Education programs.

➤ Informal Education and Youth Groups

There are many youth organizations from various sectors that are spread across the country, totaling around 25 organizations. These cater to approximately 300,000 students from kindergarten through high school and represent diverse populations from all corners of the country.

Each organization has a group leader, and the youth grow within the organization, akin to a youth movement. Many of these organizations are now facing complex financial situations.

The initial task at hand, spanning several days, was to maintain communication and understand the needs of the students, staff, and families. Some of these responses are filling a significant gap while the formal education system is not functioning. Youth organizations were among the first to react, maintaining contact with students through virtual platforms, returning to activities in a modified format, and volunteering for various organizations like Latet and LaSova.

The major challenge now is to establish a routine within this emergency situation. Staffing is lacking, and not all staff members can return to work. Emotional support is required, and the implications of the war on these activities in some organizations are not yet clear.

Gaps and Opportunities

We need to think about the risks of a possible worsening situation. Evacuating more areas in Israel will add to and intensify the chaos. Philanthropy can, and should, seek those with prior experience in leading and accommodating displaced individuals to join and prepare for escalated situations.

The creation of educational gaps is a multifaceted problem that will lead to further issues down the road, so focusing solely on emotional support is insufficient. It is suggested to develop a comprehensive education program that can be anchored through an online infrastructure. There is a need for significant and meaningful education for children during this time as it is vital for dealing with a crisis, nurturing self-esteem, and finding meaning in the darkness.